

# A Letter to Parents on Cooking

## What We Do and Why

Cooking is an important part of our curriculum. When they cook, children have an opportunity to learn about food, to be creative, and to prepare their own nutritional snacks. Lots of discoveries happen during cooking. When children see dough rise, they learn about science; when they measure flour, they learn about math. Following picture recipe cards, they learn skills that will prepare them for reading. And when we make and eat Mexican tacos, Chinese vegetables, or African peanut stew, the children learn to appreciate other peoples and cultures.



Cooking offers a special treat for children – it allows them to do things adults do. With all the adult things children aren't allowed to do, it's very rewarding for them to be encouraged to cook "just like grown-ups."

When children cook in the classroom, we talk a lot about what they are doing:

- Measuring flour
- Mixing tuna with mayonnaise
- Cracking eggs
- Whipping egg whites
- Grating cheese
- Peeling potatoes

As we talk, children learn new words. They also learn to think about what they're doing. They describe what happens when water is added to dry ingredients. They solve problems, such as how much batter should be placed in a muffin tin to allow for the ingredients to rise. They also learn to make healthy eating choices.

## What You Can Do At Home

It takes a little more time on your part to involve children in home meal preparations. But if you think about all the things your child will gain from the experience, it becomes well worth the effort. Here are some things you might point out and discuss with your child as you cook together:

- Where different utensils are found in the kitchen (and should be returned)
- The names of various foods
- How various foods look, smell, feel, and taste
- How many teaspoons or cups of particular ingredients are used
- Why some foods need to be kept in the refrigerator or freezer
- How heat changes food
- Why a variety of foods are served at each meal
- How foods are arranged on plates to make them look appealing

We welcome any family recipes you would like to share with us. And, we would be delighted for you to come in at any time to participate in a cooking activity.